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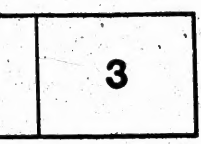

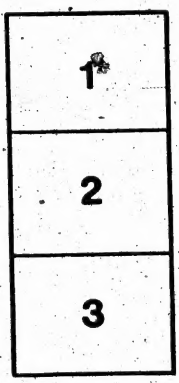

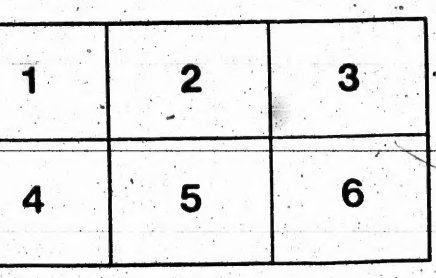

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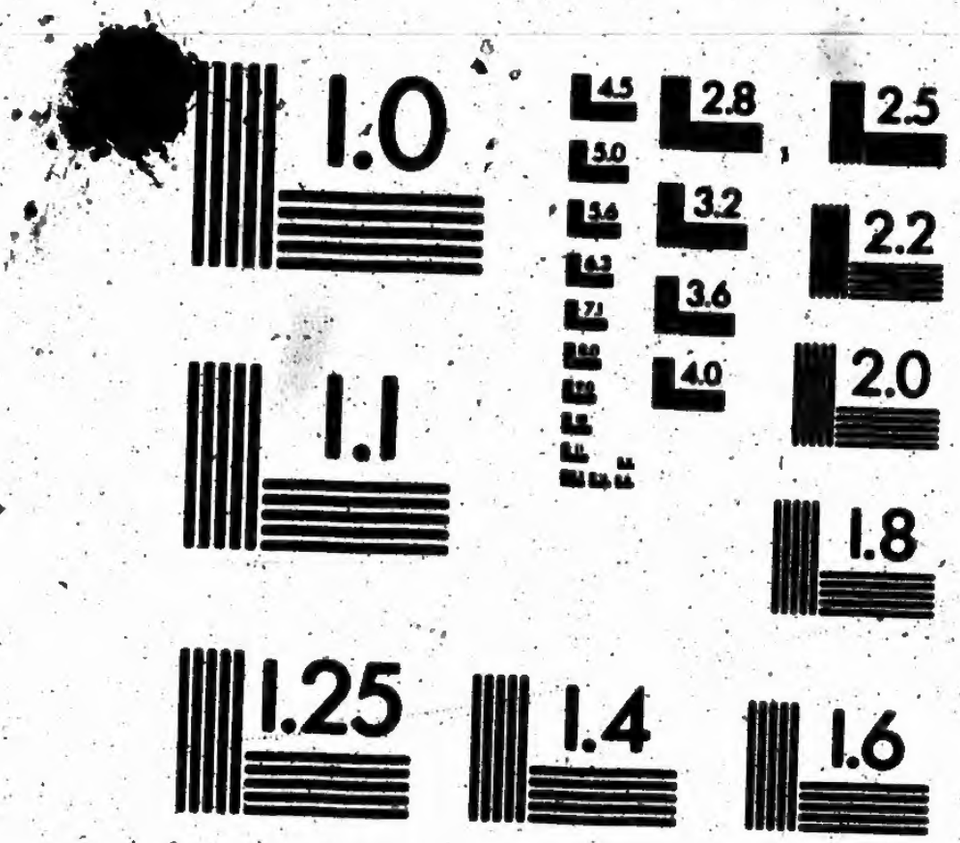

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CHRISTIANS ON EARTH AND IN HEAVEN:

THE

SUBSTANCE OF A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN THE

ADELAIDE STREET WESLEYAN-METHODIST CHURCH,

Toronto,

ON SABBATH EVENING, OCTOBER 29th, 1848,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

DEATH OF MRS. SANDERSON,

LATE WIFE OF THE REV. GEO. R. SANDERSON,

EDITOR OF THE CHRISTIAN GUARDIAN.

BY THE REV. E. RYERSON, D.D.

TORONTO:

PUBLISHED AND SOLD AT THE W. M. BOOK ROOM,

No. 9, Wellington Buildings.

1848.

J. H. LAWRENCE, PRINTER.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

TORONTO, *November* 8, 1848.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I hereby present you with the *substance* of my discourse on the occasion of the decease of your dear departed wife; not that I suppose it contains anything worthy of publication, beyond the brief personal references, but in compliance with your wishes, and as a tribute of respect to one beloved by all that had the happiness of knowing her.

You will, perhaps, be surprised that I have condensed within so narrow limits a discourse which occupied an hour and a half in its rapid delivery. But the discourse was preached without any previous *verbal* preparation whatever; and as I have nearly lost what little *verbal* memory I once possessed, I can seldom recall the words that I read or hear, and least of all, strange as it may appear, the *words* which I have employed myself. I have therefore attempted nothing more than to transcribe the *sentiments* of my extemporaneous discourse. Though I have abridged much, I hope I have not omitted any thing of importance in a *writ-*

ten discourse; and in some parts, I think I have nearly caught the language of the original, and on one or two points, have added to the original illustrations.

If the discourse thus prepared, during mere snatches of time amidst numerous other duties, shall afford any comfort or satisfaction to a friend for whom every additional year's acquaintance has increased my love and esteem; and if the perusal of what I have here written on a subject interesting to all Christians, shall be the means of edifying and encouraging any, I shall be more than compensated for this imperfect performance of the task which friendship has imposed upon me.

These meditations, and the immediate occasion of them, have deeply affected me. While they have led me to travel in thought among the angel morning stars and redeemed inhabitants of heaven, they have brought afresh to my mind past experiences and remembrances of the most touching character. The acquaintances of my youth are fast disappearing; and in some places that I visit, I seem already to be a man of another generation than of that which lived when I commenced public life. That life, busy as it has been, seems but a day. Perhaps not half a day remains to finish my course of labour. Ah! when we wrap ourselves in the shrouds of our departed friends, and, for a while, as it were, lay down in their graves, what views do we thence form of the world, of religion, of the cross, of heaven! Riches change, honours change, opinions change, passions change, friendships change, customs change, societies change; but RELIGION changes not—its 'light shines more and more unto the perfect day;' the virtue of the Cross changes not—it is still the 'power

of God and the wisdom of God to every one that believeth ;' heaven changes not—its riches, its honours, its splendours, and its joys increase and brighten forever. If faithful to our trust, we shall soon have experienced our last bereavement, and suffered our last pain ; and all beyond will be reunion, friendship, happiness. For this may we believe, and live, and preach. And what may we not, through the infinite merits of our gracious Redeemer, humbly hope for and expect in a new and everlasting meeting with our companions, long-tried friends, and fellow-labourers, where 'he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together.'

But I must stop this effusion of personal feeling, in which I had no intention to indulge when I commenced this note, and which, with some hesitation, I leave to your discretion. The indulgence of feeling and emotion is, perhaps, pardonable on an occasion which links time with eternity, and agitates the heart with the consciousness of the past, the present, and the future.

I remain, my dear Friend, with sentiments of sincere respect and feelings of deepest sympathy,

Yours, very affectionately,

EGERTON RYERSON.

The Rev. G. R. SANDERSON,
Editor of the Christian Guardian.

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SUBSTANCE OF A DISCOURSE.

"THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT."—Heb. xii. 23.

Two things, my brethren, are fearfully certain, and one thing is awfully uncertain, in respect to our future destiny. It is certain that we shall all die. The sentence of death is stamped upon our physical constitution; it is written in the decrees of Providence; and it will soon be executed upon every individual in this assembly. It is also certain that we shall all be judged for our conduct in this life. It is appointed unto men once to die, and *after death the judgment.* As certain as there is a moral government—as there is a Supreme Being of moral perfections—as man has intellectual and moral faculties and a power of volition; so certain is it that he will be hereafter judged according to the deeds done in the body. Our individual history is written in the book of God's remembrance; that history records thoughts as well as words, motives as well as actions; and God has appointed a day in which he will judge us out of those things written in his book. The darkness is as the light to Him; and every secret thing, however perpetrated in the loneliness of retirement or under the mantle of midnight, will be brought into judgement. But while death and judgment are certain to us all, the *time* of our death and judgment is awfully *uncertain.* No age, rank, or condition is exempt from the shafts of death; nor is there any rule or physiological development by which we can calculate the period of our future earthly existence. Five

weeks ago on Friday evening last, when the several Wesleyan Ministers in this City and their wives met at my house, had any person undertaken to conjecture as to the comparative length of life among the females present, the apparent health and constitutional vigour of our departed sister would have marked her out for the longest earthly career of any female of the company; but that was the last time she ever left her own dwelling; and even then a tumour was forming on the heart which baffled the best medical skill of the city employed in her behalf—which indeed lay beyond the reach of any human skill,—and which has prematurely terminated her probationary state. It often happens that the most robust and healthy member of a family is cut down, while the life of the comparatively feeble is protracted for many years. And so in this assembly, perhaps the very person whose appearance gives the strongest promise of many days and long life on earth, who is forming the largest schemes of future enterprise, and indulging the strongest hopes of future success and enjoyment, may, at this very moment, be the unconscious victim of incipient disease, and be destined to be the first follower of our departed friend to the sepulchre of the dead. We know not what a day shall bring forth. In the midst of life we are in death.

It becomes each of us then to live in a state of daily preparation either for life or for death. And let it be impressed upon our minds, that the best preparation for death, is the best fitness for life; that the best meetness for entering into the society of heaven, is the best qualification for performing our duties to the society of earth; that when we possess the mind which was in Christ, when "our conversation is in heaven," and "our life hid with Christ in God," then are we best adapted to perform every part of our appointed work here and do the will of God on earth as angels do it in heaven. The spirit of true religion is the spirit of heaven—is the reflection of its purity and benevolence; and this life is the apprenticeship of heavenly knowledge and employment.

Such is the object of the discourse which this afflictive dispensation has suggested; and I know not how I can better aid in accomplishing its purpose, than by directing our united attention to the characteristic developments of true religion in the persons of its disciples both on earth and in heaven—the former for our guidance, the latter for our comfort and encouragement; *just men*, and the spirits of just men made *perfect*.

The passage (see verses 22, 23, 24,) of which our text is a part, contains the summary of the argument of this whole epistle—the superiority of the dispensation of the gospel over every preceding dispensation; and the lofty and majestic figures of this passage are only excelled by the overwhelming grandeur and sublimity of the truths which it unfolds. Here no new religion is taught, but the most perfect dispensation of the first and the only true religion. Here the infinite benignity of God on Mount Zion is presented in inviting contrast with his unpropitiated majesty on Mount Sinai. Here Jesus with the new covenant and blood of sprinkling is exhibited in the place of Moses and the thunders and the lightnings and the tempest and the thick darkness of the burning mountain. Here, instead of being the trembling spectators of terror and of death, and the isolated occupants of a temporary habitation, believers are represented as denizens of a heavenly city—forming a part of a general assembly, privileged, sanctified, and consecrated to God as the first-born—attended by an innumerable company of angels—governed and rewarded by God the Judge of all through Jesus the Mediator—and associated with the spirits of the just men made perfect;—those first trophies of Redeeming grace, and brightest gems in the diadem of Meditorial splendour; who had "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not

accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. *Of whom the world was not worthy.*"

It is to the spirits of these just men made perfect, that the Apostle appears chiefly to refer in the text. They are called *just* or *righteous*, expressive of their relation and character on earth; they are represented as *made perfect*, indicative of their state and character in heaven; the two topics of our present discourse.

I. They are called *just* or *righteous*. This includes three things;—the justification of their persons—the rectitude of their nature—the purity of their lives.

1. These men being just or righteous implies *the justification of their persons*. They were once sinners—were by nature children of wrath even as others,—and were also guilty of the practice of sin and subject to its condemnation of death. This is the sentence of our race. "Death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned." These just were therefore once unjust; these righteous were once unrighteous; and in themselves and of themselves, they stood in the same relation and were under the same penalty with you and with me and all other sinners of mankind. How then were they made righteous? How were they made just, or justified from all things written in the law against them? Not by the law; for law cannot, in its nature, admit of pardon. Not by works of the law; for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. But they were made righteous through the merits of Him who is the 'end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' God 'hath sent forth his Son, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might

receive the adoption of sons.' 'He hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' The sacrifice of Christ is the price of our redemption; and the value of that price is commensurate with the guilt of the whole human race. 'He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the *whole world*.' 'All we like sheep have gone astray: and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of *us all*.' The spirit of every just person in heaven owes his deliverance from the curse of the law to the obedience of Christ. The Church on earth and in heaven is the purchase of his blood. The death of Christ is the life of the world.

But it does not follow that because Jesus Christ 'tasted death for every man,' every man will therefore be saved. The Saviour must be *received* as well as provided; the medicine must be taken as well as prepared, in order to cure; uneaten food will not nourish; the bread from heaven gives life only to those that eat it. 'He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.' As there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved but the name of Jesus; so *faith in his name* is the only way of being saved by him. 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness;' and the spirits of all the just persons in heaven were made righteous in the same way —the divinely appointed way of justification by faith.

What then is involved in that faith on account of which we are accounted just or righteous before God? To depend upon Christ for deliverance from the wrath to come clearly supposes a consciousness of danger; and to rely upon Him for the pardon of sin necessarily implies a sense of guilt. Hence alarm, disquietude, and sorrow for sin; hence the penitent exclamation in the Liturgy of the Church of England, "The remembrance of our sins is grievous unto us, and the burthen of them is intolerable"—language expressive of the most poignant grief of heart and the deepest

oppression of spirit; and hence earnest and importunate seeking of deliverance from anguish so distressing and a burthen so intolerable. The intensity and bitterness of penitential sorrow, produced by this incipient work of the Holy Spirit in 'convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come,' differ in degree and mode of expression according to constitutional temperament, diversity of circumstances, and the purposes of sovereign grace. In some instances the heart is gently opened like that of Lydia; or gradually prepared like those of Cornelius and the Ethiopian Treasurer; or suddenly pricked under the divinely annointed preaching of the word like the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost; or seized with the deepest anguish through the instrumentality of some remarkable Providence, like the persecuting Saul and the Philippian Gaoler. But whatever diversity there may be in the circumstances or instrumentality of this preparatory part of the work of justification by faith, it is the 'manifestation of the same Spirit given to each to profit withal;' it is in all the same discovery of danger, the same consciousness of guilt, the same contrition of spirit, the same renunciation of sin, the same inquiry after the way of salvation, the same fleeing for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel—the same exclusive reliance upon the merits of Christ as the ground of acceptance with God.—Though all justified persons may not have experienced an equal degree of that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of; yet all have experienced such a degree of it as to feel sin to be their burden and their ruin—to groan for deliverance from its bondage—to be willing to give up all for the righteousness of Christ; to be saved in God's own appointed way. And when they were thus disposed and enabled to renounce all dependence 'upon themselves or their works, to forsake every lying vanity, to rely upon the sacrifice of their great High Priest alone for pardon and acceptance with God, then did they obtain 'redemption in his blood even the forgiveness of sin.' 'Being justified by faith, they had peace

with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Their condemnation was succeeded by pardon, and their sorrow by joy; the spirit of bondage was followed by the spirit of adoption; and the depressing fears of the condemned sinner were exchanged for the grateful emotions of the justified believer.

It is thus that man becomes just with God; it is thus the spirits made perfect in heaven become "just men" on earth; and whosoever shall attempt to climb up any other way, will be treated as a thief or a robber. Our departed sister became the happy subject of this personal justification by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ about nine years since. She was born at Downpatrick in Ireland, in 1819, of a highly respectable family—came to this country when about four years of age; but though religiously and carefully educated, it was not until 1839, during a revival of religion in the Town of Niagara, under the united labours of the Rev. Messrs. M. Whiting and J. Scott, that she obtained a clear and satisfactory assurance of justification before God. Deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly desirous of obtaining deliverance from its guilt and condemnation, she yet felt the utmost repugnance to making known to any one the state and feelings of her soul as a "miserable sinner," until her 'burden of sin became so intolerable,' that she was willing to be known or unknown, to seek God any where or in any form, if she might but obtain rest to her weary and heavy laden spirit—she sought Christian counsel and prayers, and penitently trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour for a present salvation, she felt that God for Christ's sake had forgiven all her sins; and, with humble confidence and an unfaltering tongue, she could adopt the language of the prophet—"O Lord I will praise thee; for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." This evidence of her 'acceptance in the Beloved,' she never doubted during her future life. Feeling that much had been forgiven her, she loved much; and her love to her Saviour produced a corresponding affection for his disciples, and led to her immediate connexion with them in Church fellowship. Thus did she come to the

spirits of the just made perfect in the method of her being accounted just or righteous; and thus must each of us flee for refuge to the hope set before us in the sacrifice of Him 'whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins,—that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.' But their being just or righteous includes,

2. *The rectitude of their natures.* They were the subjects of a *real* as well as *relative* change; for they were sinful by nature, as well as sinners by practice. They were born in sin—were dead in trespasses and sins—were without inward holiness as well as outward righteousness. We may sometimes be inclined to the impression that the just persons mentioned in the Scriptures—the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles—were of a better moral constitution by nature than ourselves or than the rest of mankind. But they inherited the same corrupt nature—were subjects of the same moral weakness and depravity—men of like passions with ourselves. Sin is the disease of our nature as well as the crime of our race. Its corruption pervades all the powers of the soul, and taints the very imaginations of the thoughts of the heart. It envelops our minds in darkness; it inflames our hearts with enmity; it pollutes all the streams of thought, of feeling, and of action. There is neither strength nor soundness in any part of man's moral constitution. The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint; and the wounds and bruises and putrifying sores of sin extend from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. In the flesh—that is the unrenewed nature—of the spirits of the just made perfect, there dwelt no good thing, any more than in that of other men; but as they were pardoned, so were they adopted and made children of God by faith in Jesus Christ; were made *new* men in order to being made perfect men—created anew after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness. Their understandings were enlightened to see the evil of sin and the necessity and excellence of holiness; their consciences were

quickened from slumbering insensibility to a lively attestation of the truth; their wills were brought from obstinate hostility to ready obedience; and their desires and affections, their hopes and their joys, were transferred from things earthly and sinful to things divine and eternal.

Such a change is widely and essentially different from the results of natural amiableness of disposition, educational training, or intellectual refinement. The young man in the Gospel who had outwardly "kept all the commandments from his youth up," and Saul of Tarsus who was throughout his early life 'blameless touching the righteousness of the law,' lacked the essential element of this great inward transformation from 'darkness unto light and from the power of Satan unto God,' as much as the grossest publicans and sinners. It is the gift of grace, and not the production of nature; it is the work of the Spirit of God in the soul, and not the influence of one human mind over another; it is the divine creation of light and love where none existed, and not the mere growth of intellectual and social culture. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh'—is sinful, unholy, depraved—however educated and refined; and 'that which is born of the spirit is spirit'—partakes of the holiness of the Spirit by whose agency it is begotten—whatever may have been its previous state and character. To be in Christ—to belong to him, to believe in him, to be a Christian—is identical with being the subject of a new creation. 'If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature, or it is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.'

In this new birth—this spiritual resurrection with Christ—this 'renewing of the Holy Ghost'—we have the foundation of filial confidence and affection, the elements of Christian character and enjoyment, the vital springs of religious devotion and activity. 'Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.' 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God.' The life of Christ becomes

our life. 'Christ lives within us; and the life we live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God.' Our hearts are made the temples of the Holy Ghost. God walks and dwells in us, and manifests himself unto us as he does not unto the world. Where God dwells by the light and power of his Spirit, there must be peace, joy, and love; and that love is stronger than any earthly affection. This is the philosophy of inward, experimental, practical Christianity; this was the power which enabled those just persons "of whom the world was not worthy," to endure privations and sufferings, the very recital of which thrills the mind with horror; this was the mysterious energy which filled the heart of the Primitive Church, and prompted its members to such works of faith and labours of love; this is 'the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost,' which is the characteristic and privilege of all true Christians, and which develops itself in corresponding affection for God's people, in earnest desires and efforts to promote His glory, and in a holy delight in the divine word and ordinances. Thus when our deceased friend was "born of the Spirit" and was made a child of God 'by faith in Jesus Christ,' she rejoiced in the liberty of the sons of God; his people became her people; his word and ordinances her delight. Her naturally vigorous mind, which had been strengthened and enriched by a general acquaintance with the standard writers and poets of our language, now delighted in the study of the Scriptures and the best practical works on theological subjects—especially the Sermons of JOHN WESLEY, PRESIDENT DAVIES and WILLIAM JAY. The *Morning* and *Evening Exercises* of the latter were her closet companion. She loved her Church as herself, and deeply sympathised in whatever affected its interests. Entertaining a low opinion of herself, both mentally and spiritually, her professions were humble and her habits retiring; but she was conscientious in the performance of her private duties, and sought, at whatever sacrifice to her own convenience, the comfort and happiness of her domestic circle, and the relief of the poor and distressed.—Such is the spirit

of adoption, the spirit of the new creation in Christ Jesus—that rectitude of their natures which constituted the internal character of the "just men" of our text. But their being just implies

3. *The purity of their lives.* The root of faith produces the fruit of holiness. They were not only pardoned and adopted, but were '*sanctified* by faith which was in Christ.' Their union with Him produced conformity to him. The law of God written in their hearts, produced obedience to that law in their lives. Being born of the Spirit, they lived after the Spirit, and thus fulfilled the righteousness of the law, and obtained the appellation of just or righteous; for 'he that doeth righteousness is righteous.' The quality of the fruit corresponds with the character of the tree. The life is the development of the heart. Badness of life cannot be associated with goodness of heart. A pure fountain cannot send forth a polluted stream. When the heart is renewed, the life will be reformed. When Christ is enthroned in the heart, he will reign in the life. 'God is *light*' and 'God is *love*;' those who 'dwell in God and he in them' will therefore be *holy* and *merciful*. This is the spring and principle of all true morality. It originates in God; it consists in the love of God; it acts in obedience to God. 'Love is obedience in the heart; obedience is love in the life.' Hence 'this is the love of God, that ye keep his commandments.' There is no love of God without keeping his commandments; neither is there any keeping of the commandments without the love of God. Morality is therefore the offspring of religion; religion is the life of God in the soul of man—the 'love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us;' and the true manifestation of that life and that love is in the gift and person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our *sanctification* as well as righteousness. He is the source of purity as well as of pardon. His blood not only redeems us from the condemnation of sin, but 'cleanses us from all sin' itself; and the spirits of just men made perfect ascribe to

him all the glory of their being '*washed* from their sins in his own blood.'

We here see the inseparable connexion between the new heart and the new life—between the love of Christ in the heart and the holiness of Christ in the life. We also see the difference between the principle and peculiar character of Scriptural holiness or morality and the ethics of heathenism or human philosophy. The principle of the one is love; the principle of the other is fear. In the one the love of God is everything; in the other it is nothing. The former extends to the motives and latent springs of actions; the latter is limited to the actions themselves. The former is the instinctive working of a renewed nature, the practical expression of the 'law of God written in the heart,' and is therefore the perfect 'law of liberty;' the latter is a system of restraints for conventional purposes, without authority or life, and which leaves both its teachers and disciples 'servants of corruption while they promise themselves liberty.' The one is God working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure;' the other is the Leopard labouring to change his spots and the Ethiopian his skin.

Thus purity of life—embracing the whole circle of Christian virtues—is the emanation of purity of heart; and in proportion to our inward rectitude will be our outward obedience. When the heart is perfectly renewed 'in the image of God in righteousness and true holiness,' then will we esteem '*all* his precepts in *all* things to be *right*.' When we love God with all our hearts, then will we serve him with all our strength. The 'just men' of our text were therefore 'blameless and harmless the sons of God without rebuke'—walking in all the commandments of God and shining as lights in the world. They 'wrought righteousness' in the largest sense as the business of their lives, as the principles and spirit of it had been wrought in their hearts. They worshipped God; they reverenced and honoured his sanctuary; they

loved and obeyed his word; they sought and promoted his glory; they cultivated the spirit of peace, of brotherly kindness and charity, and did good unto all men as they had opportunity and ability. They were the workmanship of God and his witnesses; and so are all true believers. They have been created 'anew in Christ Jesus unto good works,' and their works delightfully correspond with the character of their new creation—'having their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.'

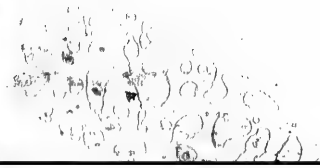
It is a cause of thankfulness to know that our departed sister was not wanting in these approved credentials of spiritual relationship with the 'just men' of former days—these practical expressions of filial relationship to God and of conformity to his will. I am not here to pronounce an eulogy upon the character of the departed. The proper object of funeral sermons is not to eulogize the dead, but to instruct the living. In this place, therefore, I refer to our departed friend only so far as to 'magnify the grace of God, and to enable us to 'glorify God in' her. She delighted in the 'habitation of God's house, and the place where his honour dwelleth;' and conscientiously sought, as far as her domestic charge permitted, the social and devotional means of grace. 'Harmless and blameless,' she is not known during her whole residence in different circuits and towns, to have given offence or caused pain to the mind of any human being; and never did she feel more cheerful than when she had the opportunity and privilege of exercising hospitality to the servants of the Church. The poor found in her a sympathising and benevolent friend; and the Church an exemplary and devoted member. Her industry and tasteful skill were employed on a valuable offering for the Wesleyan Bazaar, lately held in this city, when, ere her task was completed, she was seized with the disease which dismissed her from service to reward. During her four weeks' illness, her honoured parents were deprived, by severe domestic affliction, of the melancholy consolation of visiting her; but she gave no indications of impatience or fear; unable to do more than articulate

single words, the words most frequently on her dying lips were "Jesus" and "Christ." Her faith was strong; her spirit was resigned; and on Wednesday morning the 25th instant, without the symptoms of dying agony, she fell asleep in Christ. She was numbered with the 'just' on earth; I trust she ranks in heaven with the 'spirits of the just *made perfect*'—the second topic of discoure.

II. Their perfection is not *absolute*—so as to admit of no increase of degrees. God alone is absolutely perfect. Absolute perfection is an attribute of infinity. No finite being can be absolutely perfect any more than he can be infinite. The import of the term 'perfect' must, therefore, be limited by the condition and nature of that to which it is applied. The works of nature are perfect; but theirs is a *natural* perfection. They do not possess intellectual or moral powers; they are therefore incapable of an intellectual or moral perfection. Now the perfection of the spirits of the just in heaven is adapted to their state and character, and implies a completeness of that security and of those intellectual and moral [illegible] qualifications and pleasures which they possessed [illegible] in an imperfect degree on earth.

1. They are made perfect in their *physical and intellectual* powers. I here speak not merely of happy disembodied spirits, but of saints glorified in both body and soul in heaven. Their natural bodies were feeble, decaying, dying bodies—the subjects of various diseases and of speedy dissolution. The mournful occasion of this discourse is a present impressive illustration; as also the symbols of mourning in different parts of this assembly.—After the close of the service in Montreal on last Sabbath evening, I was informed that a gentleman at the door of the vestry wished to speak to me. I there met an old man bowed down with weakness, palsied in every limb, and leaning upon the arm of another. He reached out his trembling hand, and in a feeble tremulous voice saluted me. I told him I did not recollect him; he feebly replied,

"Lusher." I was affected to see the once accomplished and able Preacher of the Gospel, (Rev. Robert L. Lusher,) a shattered wreck of what he was when I had previously seen him in the day of his vigour and power, and I could but give utterance to the first impression of my mind—"Sir, your present weakness will soon be turned into strength." Yes, my brethren, ministers and their wives, no less than others, are subjects of feebleness, sickness and death. By what I feel in myself, I am reminded that I must soon go the way of my fathers, and that the shortness of the time to work here requires promptitude and diligence. But how elevating and delightful is, the thought, that though the body is sown in corruption (as we read at the former part of this service) it shall be raised in incorruption, and shall therefore be incapable of dissolution, or the weakness, the wrinkles or locks of decrepitude and age; that though sown in dishonour, this 'vile body' shall be raised in glory 'fashioned like unto his glorious body according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself;' that though sown a mortal body, it shall 'put on immortality,' and therefore be insusceptible of death—death itself being 'swallowed up of victory;' that though 'sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power'—a power how great we cannot now comprehend—a power adapted to the varied and ceaseless employments of immortality—a power 'equal to the angels.' Ah! how different did the body of Moses appear when he was trembling at the base of Mount Sinai, and the body of Elijah when he was fleeing from the face of Ahab, and when they appeared with the transfigured Saviour many ages afterwards—their bodies radiant with celestial glory—floating in the atmosphere—visible and invisible at pleasure—and descending from, and ascending to heaven with inconceivably more swiftness than the sunbeams, and with as much ease as swiftness. When we think of the weakness and decay of our own bodies, or look on the crumbling dust of departed friends, how consoling and refreshing is the thought, how glorious is the revealed truth, and how unspeakably blessed



does the work of redemption appear, which transforms the king of terrors into a messenger of love, and converts our bodily infirmities and death into the precursors of immortal youth and unfading beauty.

But the *intellectual powers* of the saints in heaven experience a proportionable change and elevation with the powers of their mortal bodies. Their *understandings* are enlarged in comprehension like those of the mighty angels who do his pleasure; their *wills* are perfected in submission like those of the cherubim who bow before the throne; their *affections* and *passions* and *propensities* are transformed and adapted to the objects of their happiness and to the illimitable range of their pleasures and employments. How different was the mental development of BACON and NEWTON when they were on their mothers' knees, and when the one was making the circle of the sciences and the other measuring the distances of the heavenly bodies and explaining the laws of their motions! How different were the intellectual powers of JOHN WESLEY when, in infancy, he was rescued from the devouring flames which enveloped the parental habitation, and when he had expounded the whole system of doctrinal and experimental theology and preached the gospel for half a century! So great is the difference between the powers of the mightiest intellects on earth and those of the 'spirits of the just *made perfect.*' And in proportion to the vastness of their intellectual powers, will be the extent and degree of their attainments; which leads me to remark that,

2. Theirs is a perfection of *knowledge*—not of absolute attainment, but of immeasurable increase. Much of the happiness of heaven consists in contemplation, the supreme and infinite object of which is GOD himself. It is the way, and will be one chief employment of life eternal, 'to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.' In what a moment of time after their admission into heaven, do they attain more knowledge than they can here acquire during a long life of laborious appliction. Their knowledge

is more *immediate*, and *intuitive* than it was on earth. It is not by cautious and laboured *inference* from the works of God; nor by *narration* from his revealed truth; but it is a knowledge derived from the *sight* of God himself, and therefore as superior to the *knowledge of nature* or the *knowledge of grace*, as the lustre of the meridian sun is to the glimering twilight of the morning. The 'spirits of the just made perfect' *see* God as he is, in the unclouded splendour of his infinite majesty and glory. Vision absorbs conjecture, reasoning and faith; and dispels imperfection, doubt and error. The perceptions and knowledge of even prophets and apostles on earth bear no comparison with the visions of the heavenly world. St. Paul with all his mighty intellectual powers and celestial inspiration, says, "now we see through a glass darkly"—our organs of vision are weak, the medium of observation is obscure, the discovery of objects is at best defective and imperfect; but "then shall we see face to face"—an object which the divine Moses himself could not behold on earth and live—a view which 'the spirits of the just *made perfect*' alone can bear—the superseding of every means of representation by similitude or revelation—the direct, steady, unclouded, intuitive view of the presence of God. "Now (continues the Apostle) I know in part"—with all the visions and gifts vouchsafed to me concerning the dispensations of the law and gospel, I know but in part the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of their riches and wisdom; but when that which is perfect is come, and that which is in part shall be done away, 'then shall I know even as also I am known;'—shall know for myself, and not by the testimony of another, even of an angel—shall know by intuition and not by reasoning or inference—shall know perfectly, and therefore not be liable to error or mistake—shall know beatifically, and therefore be as the angels of God. The Apostle describes the difference between the knowledge of earth and heaven, as the difference between the narrow, the confined, the imperfect notions of childhood and the more clear, comprehensive and rational views of full grown men.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." As men of ripened and matured understandings rise above and relinquish the thoughts and notions of infancy and childhood; so when we attain to the maturity of the 'spirits of the just made perfect' our present views and gifts and knowledge will appear as the thoughts and lispings of infancy. 'For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now we know in part; but then shall we know even as also we are known.'

The spirits of our friends made perfect in heaven possess more extensive knowledge of the glorious perfections of God than they possessed or ever could have acquired on earth; his power, his wisdom, his goodness, his justice, his holiness, his faithfulness, his unchangeableness, his boundless presence. What subjects of contemplation, adoration, and praise! 'They behold his face in righteousness;' they 'see Him as he is.' Proportionably increased, and increasing, is their *knowledge of the person and glories of their blessed Saviour*, together with the character and offices of the Holy Ghost. Being 'absent from the body, they are *present with their Lord*,' where they *behold* the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world,' and the added glories of his meditorial triumphs—the object of profoundest wonder and admiration to the whole heavenly world, the loftiest theme of its universal and ceaseless praises. They also survey and contemplate the *works of God*. And as they pass from world to world and gaze upon the glories of God's unbounded empire, what a universe of wonders rises before the view, throughout the universal firmament of planets, suns and systems, throughout the endless varieties and beauties of the mineral and vegetable kingdoms, throughout all orders of animated nature from the microscopic animalcule to the mightiest archangel. Those great and laborious astronomers, Sir William and John Herschel, —the father and son—toiled out the nights of many years

to make a telescopic survey of the starry heavens, from the northern and southern hemisphere of our own planet, and they have excited much admiration and applause for their observations and discoveries; but how little could they see, and how much less could they know, of the works of God throughout the amplitudes of space. But celestial vision unmeasurably outreaches the limits of telescopic observation, and celestial wings inconceivably outfly the rapidity of the solar light, and celestial minds know, in a moment, more of the 'heavens which declare the glory of God and the firmament which showeth his handy work,' than human philosophy has ever conceived during a period of six thousand years. 'The works of the Lord are great, honourable and glorious, sought of all them that have pleasure therein.' And how clear and comprehensive is the knowledge which the 'spirits of the just made perfect' possess of the *providential government* of God—his dispensations towards the various orders of intelligent beings that people the universe—the rise and fall of empires and kingdoms, of nations and tribes in our own world—the mysteries of sin and redemption—the methods of his revelation, the reasons of his dealings with families and individuals—in short, the whole range of his administration from the morning of the creation to the morning of the resurrection. All will be open to their view, not as a history, but as one vast field of vision; they *see* the end from the beginning, and trace every link in the chain of Providence which connects every event of time with the throne of God and the developments of eternity. The clouds and darkness which now envelope the operations of Providence, will not obscure the horizon of the heavenly inhabitants; they will see with the eye of undeceiving survey that 'righteousness and judgment were the habitation of his throne' as much when he was visiting his people with poverty and sickness and death, as when he was bestowing upon them riches and health and life. They will see more; they will see what now confounds reason and almost staggers faith, that the comparatively light and

temporary afflictions of this life are transmuted into unspeakable and endless blessings to "the spirits of the just made perfect"—even into a 'far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' The disclosure of the reasons of the time and place and circumstances of our birth, and of every disappointment and trial of our present state, will furnish new and affecting manifestations of wisdom and goodness in the administration of the divine government, and call forth new songs of gratitude and praise to Him that 'doeth all things well.' The most inexplicable and apparently accidental events of time will then be seen to have been essential and carefully adjusted parts of a great system of Almighty wisdom and goodness, and as perfectly adapted to the glorious end designed, as are the organs of sight to the objects of sight, or the law of gravitation to the motions of the heavenly bodies. What wondrous vision! What amazing discoveries! What 'excellency of knowledge!' And that knowledge ever expanding—ever accumulating without labour—ever approximating the infinite God, and yet ever at an infinite distance from the exhaustless resources of his attributes and perfections. The Lord God is their Sun; they see light in his light and become luminous themselves in the beams of his glory.

3. Theirs is, therefore, a perfection of *holiness*. Their vision of God is transforming. They see God as he is, they are like him. Even on earth their sight of God *by faith* exerted a transforming influence. 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they were changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' They thus became the children of light;—partaking of its pure qualities and diffusing its warming and fertilizing influences—their lives, like the countenance of Moses, reflecting the glory of the Lord. But the influence of *sight* is more powerful than that of *faith*. The spirits of the just made perfect *see* God; and their perfect vision of him makes their likeness to him complete. "Every such spirit (says the great JOHN HOWE) is become as it were an orb of purest, most operative and lively light, an

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intellectual and self-actuating sun, full of fervor and motive power." The sun, indeed, with all his glory, is not free from spots; but the spirits of the just made perfect are 'without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.' Their natures are as pure as their robes of white, and transparent as the light itself. Every act, every word, every thought, every emotion is holy; and therefore the inhabitants are perfectly holy. They love God and each other with an intenseness of affection of which they were incapable on earth. Their thoughts never wander; their affections never languish; their love never declines. Blessed beings! Glorious place! Pride and envy are not known there; nor selfishness or resentment; nor malice or slander; nor divisions or discord. They are holy as God is holy; and like him they are *one*. One motive, one affection, one object actuates them all, as one holiness pervades them all. And this holiness—so entire and complete—is absolutely necessary to their happiness. Where there is sin there must be misery. Pride, hatred, envy, revenge, or covetousness, cannot exist without producing misery. Holiness is the perfection of order—the perfection of moral health and beauty, and therefore the essential element of happiness. Without holiness—a perfect rectitude and healthfulness in all the powers and passions of the soul—the external splendours of heaven itself could no more impart happiness, than a diadem can satisfy an aching head, or splendid apparel can give pleasure to a disordered body. But the injected beams of the divine glory transform the spirits of the just into the perfect beauty of holiness—impressing the perfection of order, harmony and purity upon all their intellectual and moral powers; whilst his wisdom, benevolence and power spread out before them the landscapes of boundless space, and the riches of his own eternity.

4. Finally, the spirits of the just are made perfect in *exalted and complete felicity*. There is the absence of all evil, and the presence of all good—the one excluding suffering and sorrow, the other producing perfect pleasure and enjoyment. The bodies of the saints are spiritualized

and glorified in heaven; there are therefore no lusts of the flesh there. Their souls are perfectly holy; they therefore feel no lusts of the mind. Fallen angels and wicked men are excluded from heaven; and there are therefore no temptations of Satan and the world there. This threefold source of guilt, danger and misery on earth, has no existence in heaven. Neither are there any funerals in heaven; no bereavements; no mourners; no paralysis; no sick beds; no sinking age or crying infancy; not a sigh has ever been heard there; nor a tear shed; nor a sorrow felt; the inhabitants weep no more, thirst no more; the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne feeds them, and wipes away all tears from their eyes. They see God; and 'in his presence there is fullness of joy.' They behold the exalted Jesus, and sit on the throne with him. They mingle with the angels, and are equal to them. They sit down with the patriarchs, prophets and apostles, and join them in their hallelujahs to God and the Lamb.

As their holy life *in* Christ Jesus on earth fitted them for their holier life *with* him in heaven; so their diversified gifts and employments here may prepare them for corresponding employments there. The endless variety which we see in this world will doubtless have its counterpart in heaven. We see it in the kingdoms of nature, providence and grace; we observe it coexistent with time; and we believe it will exist throughout eternity and perpetually add to the happiness of heaven. What variety of aspect do we see on the face of the heavens and the earth! What variety in the vegetable and animal world; in plants and flowers, and trees—in insects, fishes, birds and fourfooted beasts; in the stature, features, tastes and genius of men; in the gifts, style and offices of the inspired writers, as well as in the thrones, dominions, principalities and powers of angels. "*O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdon hast thou made them all.*' The different stations and orders in the world, the Church and in heaven, suppose and require various talents and qualifications to perform their duties and fulfill their designs. This life is a

training school for heaven. No small part of our present training consists in ministrations to each other. Angels themselves are 'ministering spirits;' and it is their happiness as well as duty to be so. The ministers and saints of God on earth imbibe the same feeling, and delight in the same work. What they feel, they wish others to feel; what they know, they wish others to know. The love of Christ constrains them, and out of the feelings of their hearts their mouths speak. It is so in heaven in a degree as much higher as heaven is higher than the earth. To tell good news is delightful to the heart of friendship and love. In heaven friendship is consummated and love is all in all; and the feeling which dictated the exclamation on earth, 'Hear all ye, what the Lord hath done for my soul,' will, in its vigour of heavenly perfection, prompt the spirits of the just to an intercourse the most instructive and delightful. Their degrees of knowledge are as various as are their powers and the period of their residence in that exalted state. Though they are all stars, yet one star differeth from another star in glory; and while some shine with the brilliancy of stars, others shine as the brightness of the sun. And as God does nothing in vain, their peculiar gifts and labours on earth will prepare them for peculiar stations and employments in heaven; and their diversified knowledge, and powers, and orders qualify and adapt them variously to unfold and illustrate the manifold wisdom of God 'in bringing many sons to glory.'

What wonders may not Noah narrate of the antediluvian world, the deluge judgment, and the rainbow promise, in connexion with subsequent dispensations of Providence on earth and their issues in heaven! How pre-eminently qualified must Moses be, after thousands of years of heavenly vision and contemplation, to explain the institutions and lead the worship, the first draft and symbols of which he received and established at Horeb! What conspicuous part may David take in that music of the heavenly world, the spirit and strains of which he cultivated so much on earth! And with what a soul of light and glory may

Isaiah then dilate upon the humiliations and triumphs of the virgin-born Immanuel, and the Apostle Paul on salvation by sacrifice, from the first offering of Abel to the achievements of Calvary! And may we not suppose corresponding and appropriate stations and employments for the edification and joy of the whole family of heaven, assigned to such just men made perfect as a Eusebius and Usher, a Burnett and Mosheim, who employed themselves in time and edified believers on earth with histories of the providence of God in the establishment, preservation, and triumphs of his Church; a Boyle and Ray, who greatly improved the science of natural and experimental philosophy, and sanctified it to religion; a Luther and Calvin, a Latimer and Knox, whose souls were instinct with the life and power of the Church of Christ, and whose lives were consecrated to the revival of its purity; a More and Howe, whose meditative 'spirits explored the heavenly regions before their entrance there; a Baxter and Alleine, who sought the conversion of sinners; a Wesley and Fletcher, who aimed at the perfection of believers and the holiness of the world. And the same wisdom which assigns appropriate stations and employments to these and thousands of other 'burning and shining lights' of the Church, will be at no loss in conferring corresponding and suitable rewards upon all the 'spirits of the just, according to the deeds done in the body.' The heavenly vessels may vary in their dimensions; but they are all 'vessels of honour,' and they shall all be filled to their utmost capacity. They can each say, *God is mine*; for they are *all* 'heirs *of God*, and *joint heirs with Christ*.' The same celestial fire burns in all their bosoms, and melts them into one 'spirit with the Lord.' All is love, and therefore all is delight. They not only behold a transfigured Jesus, but they are transfigured with him—approximating him in perfection and happiness for ever and ever. New subjects of admiration are perpetually engaging their attention; new streams of knowledge are perpetually flowing into their minds; new themes of praise are perpetually employing

their tongues. Their weight of glory is far more exceeding and eternal.

Such, my brethren, are some of the thoughts suggested by the phrase of the text, in connexion with the present solemn occasion. Many practical remarks naturally flow from the foregoing observations. I will confine myself to two ;—the one a word of consolation to the bereaved—the other a lesson of instruction to all.

1. The terms consolation and bereavement are irreconcilable opposites apart from the doctrine of the text. It is that which beams the light of life and immortality into the graves of departed friends, and relieves the gloom of the house of mourning. It is true the heart melts and eye weeps, when we go into the domestic parlour and find not the companion with whom we have so often and so long taken sweet counsel ; when we sit down at the table, and find her presiding place unoccupied ; when we go from apartment to apartment and see not her form and hear not her voice, but are reminded by the echoes of our solitary steps, 'she is not here—she has gone hence—these rooms, this furniture, these works of her own hands, will know her no more.' And again is the heart dissolved and the spirit overwhelmed, when the children anxiously and importunately ask for her that bore and nursed them, and she is not. Humanity must weep when bereaved. He who was a 'man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' has sanctioned it, by weeping himself at a scene of bereavement. But the doctrine of the text transforms the character of our sorrow, as it changes the nature of our bereavement. 'We sorrow,'—and sympathising as well as bereaved friends sorrow ; but we sorrow not as those who have no hope.' The *hope* connected with our sorrow is everything. I think I am warranted in the present instance in saying, it is 'a sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection to everlasting life.' The decease of our departed sister has been her 'birth day into eternal life ;' her elevation from faith to sight—from absence to presence with the Lord

—from suffering and conflict to a 'spirit of the just made perfect." She has attained 'the end of her faith, even the salvation of her soul.' On her account therefore, we may rather sing the doxology of praise, than shed the tear of sorrow. The strongest affection on earth could not wish her spirit plucked thence, and tabernacled again in this vale of tears. And I cannot but feel persuaded, however mysterious and unfathomable the dispensation, and however impenetrable the surrounding clouds, there is ground of comfort and hope in regard to the infant offspring. I have, and I have reason to have, strong convictions in the prevalence of a mother's prayers. I have sometimes thought, there is more than human sympathy between the pious maternal and filial heart; and I verily believe that God will not take the mother to heaven and leave the children behind, but that they will be cared and provided for with more than a mother's care and ability, and will yet be a mother's crown of rejoicing in heaven.

To a fellow minister in the Church of Christ—to one who has often, by the elucidations and applications of Scriptural truth, healed the broken hearts of bereaved friends, in their hours of providential darkness,—the utterance of a word in addition to the general views already presented may seem needless and presuming. But I know well that we need in our hours of bereavement and affliction the same consolations, and hang upon the same plain immutable promises, as our people. There is a circumstantial alleviation and ground of peculiar thankfulness in the present instance, in the consciousness of having done all that affection could devise and perform, and all that human skill could accomplish, to relieve suffering and prolong life, and in the sympathies of numerous brethren and friends. Such events develope the sympathetic character of our holy religion, and render it doubly precious to our hearts even as an element of happy influence in the circles of social life. It is also peculiarly consoling to know, that the occasion of our present mourning is not the result of careless neglect or imprudent exposure, but the sovereign and manifest appoint-

ment of Him who is infinite wisdom and goodness and power. Well may my bereaved brother say in the words of the Psalmist,—and may he be enabled to do so in the Psalmist's spirit—'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because *thou* didst it.' It is a still more cheering thought, that the Almighty Disposer of life is *our* God—our *Father*—who numbers our very hairs—who has given his Son to be our Propitiation and Advocate—who has brought us nigh by his blood, renewed and sustained us by his grace, and even counted us faithful, putting us into the ministry. By the present dispensation we are brought into more immediate contact with that death and judgement and heaven for which it is the great end of our vocation to prepare men; may the sanctified effect be, a greater assimilation to the 'spirits of the just men made perfect,' and a more fervent and successful preaching of 'all the words of that life.'

2. The occasion and subject of our present discourse suggest a lesson of instruction to all. The members of the Church are reminded how soon their present seats will be vacant, to work while they have time to work, and to be ready for their summons hence. Parents are reminded how soon they may be removed from their present domestic charge, and how important to leave to their offspring the legacy of religious instruction, a holy example, and fervent prayers. We are all reminded of our inevitable connexion with death and eternity; and the topics of discourse demonstrate the inseparable connexion between the elements and principles of the Church militant and the Church triumphant—between pardon and regeneration and sanctification on earth, and glory in heaven. It is a maxim no less true than universal in Christendom, that 'grace is glory begun, and glory is grace perfected.' The glory in which the apostle Paul shines with such immortal lustre, began in conversion—in repentance, faith and adoption. To 'see God' in heaven, we must know him on earth; to be 'like him' there, we must resemble him here. This is the purpose of the Gospel—to restore us to the favour and renew us in the image of God. It is the purpose of Satan to de-

feat this object—to make us his prey, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. Which of these purposes have you been pursuing? Into which of them do you now enter? 'Choose ye, whom ye will serve.' The awful option is in your own hands. The way, the truth, the life are before you—made accessible to you by 'precious blood.' Will you walk in that way? Will you receive that truth? Will you inherit that life? 'What will it profit you to gain the whole world, and lose your own soul? Or what will you give in exchange for your soul?' The coffin, the shroud, the grave of our departed friend present to you the end of all worldly honour and gain; but the 'spirits of the just men made perfect' can alone exhibit the end of a Christian's 'work of faith and labour of love.'—Which of these ends do you prefer? Defer not your choice till to-morrow. Decide now. Incur not the guilt of rejecting the Son of God; but secure the blessedness of receiving him. Be not deceived. The character of your life will determine your state in eternity. 'For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.' Then sow to the Spirit, and your harvest will be certain, glorious, and eternal. Be Christians on earth, and you will be 'spirits of the just made perfect' in heaven. May this be the portion of us all, for Christ's sake! Amen.